

Gerald Saul

*Painting The Lens, An Archive of Process*

May 6 – June 21, 2025

Artist's reception on Saturday, May 10 at 2PM

With a culture of image making that shows no signs of slowing down production, this painting project focuses on the subject of the camera. The camera as object was initially chosen because of the sheer abundance of them in the artist's life and in the lives of his friends, colleagues, students past and present.

Growing up in Regina and picking up his first camera at 12 years old, these works reflect back to his first experiments in filmmaking using 8mm film cameras with his childhood friends. Over his long career, Saul has worked across many forms and formats, from 16mm feature dramas, animations and ultra low budget processes, to processing film in his bathtub.

With 456 painted works in the exhibition, this typology of cameras include a breadth of different examples of what constitutes a "camera": consumer and professional video, 8mm and super 8 film, 16mm motion picture film camera, medium and large format, 35mm film, toys, Lego, cameras made from aluminum cans, candles molded in the shape as a camera, all painted with a solid coloured ground. Quoting the artist:

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The history of imaging making which falls under the umbrella term of photography is vast. It began in a number of different countries, with different formats, chemical processes and outcomes. Even what we now consider to be one of the first photographs wasn't celebrated as successful and it's inventor mostly fell out of favour with the image making community of the time. A reliable means of mechanically capturing and storing an image was at its inception, and still is, the means of what constitutes the visual pictorial history of photography.

But we should take a step back and review the dark spectacle that makes it all possible. Camera obscura is a naturally occurring phenomenon which occurs when light is squeezed through an aperture, either a hole, lens or even the holes of a colander. The reflected image is projected in reverse on the opposing surface. For even greater clarity or image or spectacle, small spaces like boxes or entire rooms can be made into a camera obscura. The magic of the black box. This optical phenomenon has been used for centuries as a tool for helping artists and draftsmen make perspectively accurate sketches of landscapes or architecture. But the camera obscura is only capturing the outside world inside, not fixing it.

Joseph Niépce's View from the Window at Le Gras is the earliest known photograph, made sometime between 1825-27. It is reproducing a view from the second floor window of Joseph's home at

Mirror with a memory

Erik Hood

May 2025

"the background is left without detail because, right from the start, I wanted people to look at the camera and not to think about what the camera is looking at. Cameras naturally create narratives so if we see a camera pointing at something, then it is that "something" that is important. I wanted the camera to be the focus."

In this instance, they also function as objects that can be lent and borrowed as models to be painted. The exchange became an important aspect to the project, reinforcing Saul's relationship and connection to the lender. Painting cameras began in earnest in 2018, but by the time of Covid protocols of March of 2020, the future of the project looked to be in peril as borrowing new "models" was becoming increasingly difficult to acquire. Again from the artist:

"Especially during the summer of 2020, the borrowing of cameras was often a very important exchange in my week. People would come to my deck and we'd share a beverage from appropriate distances and talk. It was that summer that I realized how important that personal exchange was. People, sometimes old friends or students, sometimes nearly complete strangers, would want

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Chalon-sur-Saône in the Burgundy region of France. The most successful of these trials were made by applying a thin coating of light-sensitive bitumen (in oil of lavender) over a polished pewter plate. After an exposure of eight hours, spread over several days, the plate was washed and then fixed, with the exposed portions of the bitumen hardened, while the less exposed portions of the plate were washed away. This experiment yielded a faint image without much detail. Joseph called the process heliography, or writing with the sun.

If you're interested in viewing this sacred piece of photographic relics, it is on permanent display at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas in Austin. It is only one work from an enormous acquisition of photographs, negatives and photographic materials acquired by the University of Texas from German collectors Helmut and Alison Gernsheim in 1963.

Now kept on permanent display in a tomb like chamber, the pewter is well lit from above, yet the image is extremely faint and only visible from a particular angle through the protective glass. This framed view of roofs and trees is contained firmly within a temperature controlled, oxygen-less holding vessel.

This isn't the first or best example of his image making, but most importantly the one that has survived the last two centuries. This is the earliest of dozens of examples that still exist of Niépce's dec-



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Centre is situated on Qu'Appelle Treaty 4 territory, the traditional lands and meeting grounds of the Cree, Saulteaux, bands of Ojibwa peoples, Dakota, Lakota, Nakota and the homeland of the Metis Nation; whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries.

to tell me about why the camera they brought was important to them. The cameras had life and personality."

Gerald Saul is a Regina-based filmmaker, educator, curator and writer who studied filmmaking at the University of Regina and later earned an MFA in film production from York University, Toronto. In 2016, an immersive exhibition of his work and films, *Anecdotal Evidence: The Work of Gerald Saul*, was mounted at the Art Gallery of Regina with a text by Regina based writer Ken Wilson. Key film works include *Wheat Soup* (1987), *Life is Like Lint* (1999), *25 Short Films In and About Saskatchewan* (1999) and the *Toxic* cycle (2003) as well as hundreds of experimental and animated shorts. Now in his twenty sixth year as professor of film production at the U of R, Saul continues to find cameras alluring as playthings, as tools for discovery, and as both creators and capturers of memories.

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ades long experiments. For the final four years of his life, he partnered with fellow compatriot Louis Daguerre. Niépce was largely forgotten about in the historical record of photography, his process simply didn't sell. It was too arduous, and the exposure times were far too long to be made into a profitable commercial venture. But this French partnership did bear fruit as it was Daguerre's process which immediately preceded Niépce's death, that took hold. Building upon the work he did with Niépce, the Daguerreotype developed handsomely with global audience of producers. Daguerre's famous plates were more detailed and required shorter exposures, making it more appealing for portraits. Daguerreotypes are plates consisting of a silver base and developed with mercury fumes, became the first publicly available photographic process. Typically used to capture aesthetic or emotional moments of personal meaning, cameras and the images they produce, are designed with an audience in mind. They fit into an archive, a puzzling system of image making devices that have been developed and designed for specific demands within cultural needs. In many applications, the user predicts the camera. Since the market is largely driven by ease of use for young or inexperienced users, portability and price, most consumer-grade devices emphasize ease of handling and automation over performance.



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